



Report on an unannounced inspection of

HMP Rye Hill

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

20–21 August, 2–13 September 2024



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Introduction

It was a pleasure to join the inspection team at this East Midlands category B training prison that held 662 prisoners convicted of sexual offences. The director, who had been in post for just a few months, was building on the excellent work of his predecessor in making this one of the best closed prisons in the country. Every morning, he and his senior team walked round the jail talking to staff and prisoners. He also used regular video messages to communicate his priorities. What was particularly impressive was the lack of any complacency at the prison. Leaders had worked hard to address the few criticisms we made in our positive 2019 inspection, with a continuous focus on improving standards.

For example, although violence levels had been low, the team at Rye Hill continued to focus on safety. Prisoners who were considered to be high risk were targeted for extra support even if they had not yet got into difficulties. The result was one of the safest closed prisons in the country for both prisoners and staff. In the past, some of the older prisoners had been frightened by the noise and activity on the wing, so leaders introduced a more controlled regime that still meant men were unlocked for more than nine hours a day. Leaders made sure that segregation was used very sparingly with only two men on the unit during our visit.

Relationships between prisoners and staff were a hallmark of Rye Hill, with many men telling inspectors that that staff supported them and treated them with respect. Prisoner-led initiatives were integral to the success of the jail and peer workers were having a very positive effect in many parts of the prison. For example, there was exceptional support for visits, prisoners were heavily involved in the prison's very active reading strategy and there was a lot of help for new arrivals. The prison will need to continue to be careful that the impressive level of trust given to prisoners does not lead to complacency, particularly among the less experienced officers.

There was an impressive focus on getting prisoners into employment and those who worked hard were able to earn more money than in most closed prisons. Some prisoners were taken aback because they were not allowed to get away with watching daytime television or hanging around on the wing.

It was disappointing to see that staffing shortfalls were leading to cancellations of hospital visits, particularly as every day officers were being sent out to help in another nearby jail. We also found that although phone monitoring of risky prisoners was taking place, breeches of public protection rules were not being addressed.

There was good support in place for the many prisoners facing long sentences and a package had been developed that helped men to understand what to expect at each stage of their sentences. The offender management unit was offering good support and at certain times every week, prisoners were able to drop in to discuss issues they wanted to raise about their progression.

Unlike in public sector prisons, at Rye Hill applicants for prison officer roles were given face-to-face interviews, and with a longer training programme and better mentoring, retention rates were good and the many inexperienced staff at the prison felt well supported and confident in their roles.

Towards the end of 2024 the new accommodation will mean the arrival of 458 more prisoners and the prison will become a category C trainer. This will inevitably be a challenging time for Rye Hill, but I am confident that, with such a strong leadership and staff team, the jail will take these changes in its stride.

There is much that staff and prisoners can be proud of at this progressive and innovative jail. We hear a lot about rehabilitative culture during our inspections, but at Rye Hill this is integral to the operation of the institution. There was a sense of hope among prisoners as they worked their way through their sentences, supported by an authoritative and effective staff team.

Charlie Taylor

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

September 2024

What needs to improve at HMP Rye Hill

During this inspection we identified six key concerns, of which two should be treated as priorities. Priority concerns are those that are most important to improving outcomes for prisoners. They require immediate attention by leaders and managers.

Leaders should make sure that all concerns identified here are addressed and that progress is tracked through a plan which sets out how and when the concerns will be resolved. The plan should be provided to HMI Prisons.

Priority concerns

1. **There was a risk that complacency and insufficient safeguards undermined otherwise excellent peer support schemes.**
2. **Managers had not resolved long-standing problems affecting good patient outcomes.** This included too few hospital appointments being facilitated by the prison and the lack of a bookable consultation space for the mental health team to undertake assessments and treatment.
3. **The range of education and work available was appropriate for a category B prison, but there were not yet sufficient vocational training places available for the growing number of category C prisoners.**

Key concerns

4. **Leaders did not use data well to identify and explore potential areas of unfair treatment.**
5. **Psychology services still did not meet the needs of the population and mental health transfers were taking far too long.**
6. **Public protection arrangements for prisoners subject to contact restrictions were not robust.** Where there had been breaches of restrictions, no action had been taken.

About HMP Rye Hill

Task of the prison

Rye Hill is a privately run category B training prison for prisoners convicted of sexual offences.

Certified normal accommodation and operational capacity (see Glossary) as reported by the prison during the inspection

Prisoners held at the time of inspection: 662

Baseline certified normal capacity: 600

In-use certified normal capacity: 600

Operational capacity: 664

Population of the prison

- 120 new prisoners received in the previous 12 months.
- 41 prisoners were foreign nationals.
- 124 prisoners were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.
- 144 prisoners were over the age of 60.
- 91% of prisoners were serving more than 10 years or life.
- 42% of prisoners had been at Rye Hill for more than four years.
- 62% of prisoners had a category C categorisation.
- 70 prisoners released into the community in the last 12 months.

Prison status (public or private) and key providers

Private G4S

Physical health provider: Practice Plus Group

Mental health provider: Practice Plus Group

Substance misuse treatment provider: Forward Trust

Dental health provider: Time for Teeth

Prison education framework provider: Novus

Escort contractor: GeoAmey

Prison Group Director

Neil Richards

Brief history

HMP Rye Hill opened in 2001. In 2014, the prison underwent a re-role to hold an entire population of prisoners convicted of sexual offences.

Short description of residential units

All units were of identical design and held about 80 prisoners.

None of the wings had a specialist function, although Andrews wing was used as the first night and induction unit.

Name of director and date in post

Lee Davies, June 2024

Changes of director since the last inspection

Pete Small, April 2017 – June 2024

Independent Monitoring Board chair
Peter Griffiths

Date of last inspection
1–13 September 2019

Section 1 Summary of key findings

Outcomes for prisoners

- 1.1 We assess outcomes for prisoners against four healthy prison tests: safety, respect, purposeful activity, and preparation for release (see Appendix I for more information about the tests). We also include a commentary on leadership in the prison (see Section 2).
- 1.2 At this inspection of HMP Rye Hill, we found that outcomes for prisoners were:
 - good for safety
 - good for respect
 - reasonably good for purposeful activity
 - good for preparation for release.
- 1.3 We last inspected HMP Rye Hill in 2019. Figure 1 shows how outcomes for prisoners have changed since the last inspection.

Figure 1: HMP Rye Hill healthy prison outcomes 2019 and 2024



Progress on key concerns and recommendations

- 1.4 At our last inspection in 2019, we made 25 recommendations, six of which were about areas of key concern. The prison fully accepted 15 of the recommendations and partially (or subject to resources) accepted nine. It rejected one of the recommendations.
- 1.5 At this inspection we found that five of our recommendations about areas of key concern had been achieved and one had not been achieved. The one recommendation that had not been achieved was in

the area of respect. For a full list of the progress against the recommendations, please see Section 7.

Notable positive practice

1.6 We define notable positive practice as:

Evidence of our expectations being met to deliver particularly good outcomes for prisoners, and/or particularly original or creative approaches to problem solving.

1.7 Inspectors found 12 examples of notable positive practice during this inspection, which other prisons may be able to learn from or replicate. Unless otherwise specified, these examples are not formally evaluated, are a snapshot in time and may not be suitable for other establishments. They show some of the ways our expectations might be met, but are by no means the only way.

Examples of notable positive practice		
a)	Case management plans were used effectively to challenge those most likely to engage in violence before they had done so.	See paragraph 3.11
b)	Training and support for new staff was better than we usually see. Many frontline staff had less than a year in post, but they were confident in their role and the wings were well ordered.	See paragraph 4.2
c)	Staff and prisoner relationships were excellent. Well-led and confident staff were visible on the wings and had the confidence and time to help prisoners with their requests.	See paragraph 4.2
d)	A wide range of peer-led initiatives provided valuable day-to-day support to fellow prisoners and had been instrumental in bringing about meaningful change.	See paragraph 4.6
e)	Wing cleaners were well supervised and their efforts recognised in a monthly cleanest wing competition. Cleaners had a sense of pride about maintaining the high standards of cleanliness.	See paragraph 4.9
f)	Each prisoner in a double cell was provided with their own television and headphones to reduce a potential source of friction.	See paragraph 4.13
g)	A small number of prisoners received instruction each week in how to prepare and serve a meal from scratch as part of the Ready, Steady, Learn to Cook initiative.	See paragraph 4.19
h)	Prisoners could browse and order items using an electronic catalogue, reflecting the many purchases made in this way in the community.	See paragraph 4.21

i)	The media hub employed prisoners with IT skills to produce high quality products, such as video blogs and the prison newspaper to keep prisoners informed about matters that affected them.	See paragraph 4.24
j)	The excellent range of enrichment activity available each day on the wing and the activity centre, including regular seminars by visiting key speakers, was better than we usually see.	See paragraph 5.6
k)	A community engagement PE instructor offered valuable one-to-one support to some prisoners who had previously not engaged with the gym.	See paragraph 5.11
l)	The 'Making Sense of a Long Sentence' (MSOALS) programme was divided into four distinct phases which helped prisoners to manage expectations and give purpose to their long custodial sentences by dividing it into four distinctive phases. This helped prisoners manage expectations and gave purpose.	See paragraph 6.9

Section 2 Leadership

Leaders provide the direction, encouragement and resources to enable good outcomes for prisoners. (For definition of leaders, see Glossary.)

- 2.1 Good leadership helps to drive improvement and should result in better outcomes for prisoners. This narrative is based on our assessment of the quality of leadership with evidence drawn from sources including the self-assessment report, discussions with stakeholders, and observations made during the inspection. It does not result in a score.
- 2.2 Leadership at Rye Hill was among the best we have seen in recent years. The previous director had been in post since 2017, was well known to prisoners and staff and had implemented many of the structures that supported the good outcomes noted in this report. The new director was promoted two months before our inspection. This transition had been managed well and the strengths, including the accessibility of leaders, good communication and high expectations among leaders and managers, continued.
- 2.3 In our surveys, staff and prisoners were much more positive about leadership than those at other prisons. In our staff survey, 84% said that leaders were approachable and took the time to listen, 85% said that leaders always or often set high standards for staff and 81% reported that they challenged poor behaviour. Similarly, 81% of prisoners said they could talk to senior managers if they wanted to compared to just 34% elsewhere. Of those prisoners who had shared a problem, 76% said that leaders had tried to help them.
- 2.4 We received many positive comments about leadership, including a frontline officer who said: 'I truly believe that the senior management team have the best interests of both the staff and prisoners at heart.' and a prisoner who commented: 'Great leadership... This prison is an amazing model for all prisons.'
- 2.5 Leaders had responded well to our previous report and addressed many of the issues we raised, most notably the previously poor perceptions of safety among older prisoners. They had also invested in improving the visits hall and the 'making sense of a long sentence' booklets that formed a part of key work sessions.
- 2.6 Initiatives, including daily rounds and video messages by the director, made sure he had a good understanding of outcomes for prisoners and that prisoners and staff knew who the director was and were well informed of his priorities.
- 2.7 Management oversight of everyday systems and processes, including induction, applications and allocation to activities, ensured that they worked effectively. This eliminated the day-to-day friction we usually find in other establishments and gave staff and prisoners the time to develop good relationships.

- 2.8 Leaders had created an innovative culture that empowered staff and prisoners to implement ideas to improve the prison community further. As a result, we found several examples of positive practice across the healthy prison tests. In addition, many prisoners had been empowered to contribute to their community through a wide range of peer-led schemes and community events.
- 2.9 New staff were well supported through their initial training and by line managers when they started at Rye Hill. As a result, despite more than 40% of prison officers having less than one year's experience, they were confident in their role and the wings were well ordered.
- 2.10 Notwithstanding these strengths, it was disappointing that the reporting of time out of cell was inaccurate, overstating the prison's performance by about an hour a day. This had not been identified by G4S leaders or the controller's team.
- 2.11 Planning for the imminent expansion and re-role to a category C establishment was detailed, although this will undoubtedly create challenges and risks for the director and his team.

Section 3 Safety

Prisoners, particularly the most vulnerable, are held safely.

Early days in custody

Expected outcomes: Prisoners transferring to and from the prison are safe and treated decently. On arrival prisoners are safe and treated with respect. Risks are identified and addressed at reception. Prisoners are supported on their first night. Induction is comprehensive.

- 3.1 Reception and early days processes remained impressive.
- 3.2 There were about five new arrivals a week, many of whom had long journeys to get to Rye Hill which was a national resource that took prisoners from all over the country. Prisoners arrived at a relaxed waiting area instead of being locked in a holding room, and were given a hot drink. In our survey, 95% said they were treated well or quite well in reception.



Reception waiting area

- 3.3 Peer work was used very effectively to support new arrivals. Induction orderlies met and sat with them in reception and later showed them round the induction unit and explained what would happen on their first night and the next morning. We spoke to prisoners who had recently arrived who told us they found this support reassuring and helpful.

Wing staff completed comprehensive welfare checks on prisoners for their first 24 hours, which gave them an opportunity to get to know the prisoners and understand their needs. In our survey, 87% said they felt safe on their first night.

- 3.4 First night cells that we observed were clean and appropriately furnished, and prisoners were given a set of clothes, bedding, a plate, bowl, cutlery and a kettle in reception.



A wing (induction) reception-ready cell

- 3.5 Induction started the following morning and remained peer led and comprehensive, with strong oversight by a manager. Over three days, induction orderlies talked prisoners through practicalities like the daily routine and how to make menu choices and order items from the canteen. They also covered the range of peer support available (see paragraph 4.6), work and education opportunities and how the prison culture emphasised tolerance and respectful communal living (see paragraph 4.31). In our survey, 88% of prisoners said that induction told them everything they needed to know about the prison compared with 70% at similar prisons.
- 3.6 There was a focus on keeping prisoners safe, with multiple opportunities to identify concerns and vulnerability. Induction orderlies, other peer workers and staff were experienced in identifying and reporting potential causes for concern. Leaders discussed new arrivals

at a weekly meeting before they arrived, which enabled them to understand prisoners' needs in advance and put relevant support in place.

- 3.7 Prisoners had better access to the canteen in their early days than we usually see, which prevented them from accruing debt. A loan of up to £15 was available on arrival to buy vape or grocery packs (paid back at £1 a week) and, because the canteen orders were processed on site, those who had their own money were also able to place and receive a one-off full order rather than wait up to six days until the next order deadline.

Promoting positive behaviour

Expected outcomes: Prisoners live in a safe, well ordered and motivational environment where their positive behaviour is promoted and rewarded. Unacceptable conduct is dealt with in an objective, fair, proportionate and consistent manner.

Encouraging positive behaviour

- 3.8 Rye Hill remained a safe prison with a supportive and positive culture. Leaders set clear and consistent boundaries and motivated prisoners to behave, engage and progress. The approach to promoting positive behaviour was impressive: an extensive range of prisoner-led initiatives (PLIs) (see paragraph 4.6) had a positive impact on relationships and the development of the prison's community ethos that we found at the last inspection.
- 3.9 The ability to engage in a wide range of PLIs gave prisoners a voice and contributed to fostering an environment where nearly all prisoners told us that they felt safe. In our survey, 11% of prisoners said that they felt unsafe compared with 30% at the previous inspection.
- 3.10 The improved perceptions of safety reflected a substantial reduction in the rate of violence since the last inspection which was now among the lowest of all adult male prisons. During the previous 12 months, 27 acts of violence had been reported, compared to 138 at the last inspection. Very few incidents were serious.
- 3.11 Despite the low levels of recorded violence, leaders continued to act to improve safety further. For example, a project had been carried out to identify the 20 prisoners who were most susceptible to violence based on their past behaviour in custody. These prisoners then voluntarily engaged with the safety team to be supported by challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs – see Glossary). Following the completion of the project, leaders were able to demonstrate a reduction in the potential for poor behaviour by several of the prisoners who had engaged.
- 3.12 This proactive use of CSIP was embedded in the prison's strategy to reduce violence and discussed at the well-attended monthly Violence

Reduction Project Board meeting that reviewed the continuing effectiveness of this approach. Prisoners were also able to self-refer to the safety team for consideration of management by CSIP where they felt they might benefit from additional support, for example following a period of segregation for poor behaviour.

- 3.13 The safety team responded promptly to emerging issues, for example a recent forum aimed at victims had been held to gain understanding and provide reassurance to all prisoners. The use of 'controlled conversations', a form of mediation used to address identified issues of bullying or other inappropriate behaviour, had also been successful.
- 3.14 Similarly, where prisoners displayed other forms of poor behaviour, this was challenged and the formal incentives scheme was used. Where prisoners were reduced to the basic level of the scheme, they received appropriate targets and oversight from residential managers.

Adjudications

- 3.15 There had been 833 disciplinary hearings over the previous 12 months, which was lower than at the last inspection. More recent data indicated that the number was reducing further. Nearly a fifth of the charges laid during 2024 related to one prisoner with challenging behaviour which included acts of violence.
- 3.16 There was no substantial backlog of adjudications, although 15 for the most serious charges that had been referred to the police remained outstanding, with little evidence of progress.
- 3.17 Most adjudication charges were for disobeying prison rules and the award of punishments was consistent. However, in the hearings we reviewed, levels of enquiry were not always evident in written documentation and some aspects of procedure had not been adhered to. This was reflected in the number of quashed adjudications, of which there had been nine over the previous year.
- 3.18 The quarterly segregation, management and review group meeting (see paragraph 3.28) provided regular oversight of the adjudications process although, while weaknesses in the process were identified, it was not always evident what actions had been taken to improve practice.

Use of force

- 3.19 Use of force had reduced since the previous inspection and was continuing a downward trajectory. Over the previous 12 months, there had been 157 recorded incidents, although a considerable number were attributable to the management of one segregated prisoner. Most involved the use of handcuffs to ensure safe movement and protection of staff.
- 3.20 It was positive that there had been no recorded use of special accommodation and no reliance on PAVA (incapacitant spray) or use of batons which leaders had taken the decision not to issue. This was

reflective of the calm and safe environment in the prison (see paragraph 3.8).

- 3.21 Leaders oversaw a weekly review of all incidents of force, including available camera footage and staff statements. There was evidence that appropriate action was taken where learning was identified. However, use of data to monitor use of force and act on emerging patterns was underdeveloped.
- 3.22 In our case studies, most force was justified and low level, with evidence of de-escalation. Nevertheless, not all staff activated body-worn video camera footage (BWVC) and not all footage of either BWVC or CCTV was retained following an incident. Leaders relied on the use of BWVC for planned interventions and, while we did not identify any issues of significant concern, it was concerning that none of the recordings of planned interventions fully captured the incident for evidential purposes.

Segregation

- 3.23 Segregation was used sparingly and only for those prisoners whose behaviour could not safely be managed on normal location. Leaders ensured that the use of the unit was predominantly for positive interventions and an opportunity for staff to provide good day-to-day care for some very challenging prisoners.
- 3.24 At the time of the inspection, there were just three segregated prisoners. One was returned within 24 hours of initial segregation, while the remaining two, both of whom had been held for more than 14 days, were encouraged to be fully involved in addressing their risk. Subject to risk assessment, they could access activities off the unit as part of bespoke reintegration planning, which was positive.
- 3.25 It was evident that reintegration planning was embedded and further supported by staff providing an outreach service for prisoners who had previously been segregated. This service complemented key work sessions, allowing the small number of prisoners who required additional support to receive regular sessions with segregation staff to support their return to normal location.
- 3.26 There was an innovative use of peer support in segregation with appropriate safeguards in place. This included offering support to prisoners before and during review boards, or engaging in one-to-one association on the unit where bespoke plans identified this need.
- 3.27 Living conditions on the unit were reasonably good. Communal areas were clean and cells were free of graffiti, although none benefited from in-cell electricity or television points which would have been beneficial in some cases, such as segregated prisoners identified as being at risk of self-harm.



Segregation unit landing and cell

- 3.28 The segregation, management and review group (see paragraph 3.18) meeting was reasonably well attended. A range of data were considered, but it was not clear what actions were identified or acted on to drive further improvement.

Security

Expected outcomes: Security and good order are maintained through an attention to physical and procedural matters, including effective security intelligence and positive staff-prisoner relationships. Prisoners are safe from exposure to substance misuse and effective drug supply reduction measures are in place.

- 3.29 The use of illicit substances was exceptionally low. During the previous 12 months, the positive mandatory drug testing (MDT) rate was among the lowest of all adult male prisons at less than 1%. There were very few drug finds, prisoners appearing under the influence or refusing to be tested.
- 3.30 Despite the low MDT rate, leaders took the threat of drug use seriously and a considerable number of risk-based tests were conducted, in part due to the high number of prisoners in trusted positions. Together with suspicion-based testing, there were more than 100 tests each month, all of which indicated a very low prevalence of drug use among prisoners. Information sharing between security and substance misuse teams was also effective, especially in identifying potential misuse of prescribed medication.
- 3.31 The security team were supportive of initiatives across the prison. Physical and procedural security procedures were proportionate and supported the respectful ethos of the prison. For example, as part of the further expansion of PLI schemes (see paragraph 4.6), senior leaders, including the head of security and deputy director, jointly interviewed prisoners applying for the most trusted roles that had minimal supervision.

- 3.32 Given the low levels of violence and drug use, the security team were aware of the risk of complacency, especially in less experienced staff. Leaders had identified issues of potential concern, for example a reduction in the number of intelligence reports submitted and officers ability to conduct prisoner searches. To mitigate these risks, a well embedded programme of covert testing and contingency planning was in place and leaders had recently held security roadshows to develop staff competence. Nevertheless, while the prison-wide use of PLI initiatives was to be applauded, the need remained to make sure that sufficient safeguards were in place and boundaries were not blurred (see paragraph 4.7).
- 3.33 A monthly tactical assessment was well embedded to make sure that emerging security threats were identified. Security analysts provided regular cover and, in conjunction with night staff, emerging intelligence was processed promptly and disseminated to relevant departments. Despite this, we identified that key information such as public protection was not always fully acted on by the receiving departments (see paragraph 6.21).

Safeguarding

Expected outcomes: The prison provides a safe environment which reduces the risk of self-harm and suicide. Prisoners at risk of self-harm or suicide are identified and given appropriate care and support. All vulnerable adults are identified, protected from harm and neglect and receive effective care and support.

Suicide and self-harm prevention

- 3.34 The environment and culture in the prison supported well-being. Prisoners could take part in a wide range of purposeful and recreational activities, and many told us they valued the real and meaningful opportunities to learn new skills, develop their own projects and take on positions of responsibility. As a result, almost all prisoners spent reasonable time out of their cells in a calm, respectful and clean environment, and staff were approachable and responsive to their needs.
- 3.35 There had been no self-inflicted deaths at Rye Hill since 2006. The rate of recorded self-harm had decreased by one-third since the previous inspection and was among the lowest of all closed adult male prisons. Very few incidents of self-harm required hospital treatment.
- 3.36 Support for those who self-harmed was good. There was a focus on identifying and addressing underlying issues (for example, anxiety about a forthcoming parole hearing or feeling upset after speaking to family on the phone) and, as a result, most prisoners only needed support from the formal ACCT processes (assessment, care in custody and teamwork case management of prisoners at risk of suicide and self-harm) for a short time.

- 3.37 The fortnightly vulnerable prisoners meeting continued to provide a very effective forum for leaders from different areas of the prison (including the mental health team, residential units and safer custody) to share information and to generate ideas of how to support individual prisoners in crisis. Support for those with the most complex needs was particularly good.
- 3.38 Together with a culture that encouraged prisoners to support each other informally, there was also a good range of peer worker roles that provided more formal support and links to other services in the prison. For example, Assist mentors held well-being check-ins with those under the care of the mental health team and could also make referrals for prisoners who wanted it. Prisoners could also ask to speak to Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support to their peers) at any time, although some told us that it was hard to maintain confidentiality in shared cells, with no designated Listener suites and very limited private rooms on the wings.

Protection of adults at risk (see Glossary)

- 3.39 Staff at all levels demonstrated a good understanding of indicators of vulnerability and most said they would refer any concerns to a manager. Prisoners of concern were discussed at a fortnightly multidisciplinary vulnerable prisoners meeting and appropriate support was put in place.
- 3.40 Leaders were improving links with the local authority. They attended quarterly meetings remotely and had recently met two named contacts from the board to set up and formalise the working relationship.

Section 4 Respect

Prisoners are treated with respect for their human dignity.

Staff-prisoner relationships

Expected outcomes: Prisoners are treated with respect by staff throughout their time in custody and are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions and decisions.

- 4.1 Staff and prisoner relationships were excellent and underpinned the positive community ethos at Rye Hill.
- 4.2 On most of our visits to the wings, staff were patrolling the landings and helping prisoners. Staff we spoke to, knew the prisoners in their care well, were confident about their role and told us they usually had the time to do the things that they had promised prisoners. This was particularly impressive, given that over 40% of frontline staff had less than 12 months' experience. Staff received monthly supervision from a line manager, which was positive and something we do not always see. Senior managers were similarly visible, with the director visiting the units during the domestic period each morning when prisoners were out of their cells before moving to work and education.
- 4.3 The use of preferred names by prisoners and staff was positive and we saw staff and prisoners joining in activities together, which helped to break down barriers further. In our survey, 91% of prisoners said that most staff treated them with respect compared with 80% at the last inspection and 82% at similar prisons. Responses to the question about whether a member of staff had talked to them about how they were getting on in the previous week were similarly impressive (74% v 60% and 74% v 45%).
- 4.4 Almost all prisoners were in full-time work or education and had daily contact with staff from these departments. Most prisoners also had weekly contact with a key worker (see Glossary), which was much more frequent than in most prisons. It was positive that these sessions were usually conducted by the same key worker who was, in most cases, able to develop rapport and trust with the prisoner.
- 4.5 Notes from the key work sessions we reviewed showed that they covered a range of suitable topics, such as perceptions of safety (see paragraph 3.10), maintaining family ties (see paragraph 6.2) and progress with the 'Making sense of a long sentence' (MSOALS) workbooks (see paragraph 6.9). In our survey, 80% of those with a key worker said they were helpful.
- 4.6 Another factor that contributed to the positive community ethos was the effective use of an impressive range of prisoner-led initiatives (PLIs,

see paragraph 4.27) that covered all aspects of prison life. Each initiative was supported by several prisoners, a minority of which were paid for their work. Many prisoners provided support for their peers voluntarily. We observed mentors performing their roles on the wings and most had a caseload and timetable of prisoners they were helping.

- 4.7 A manager had recently been appointed to coordinate the PLIs and met the leads for each initiative regularly to monitor their activities and offer support. The mentor roles were trusted positions and often required moving between wings. Some of the lead mentors had greater freedom of movement around the prison, access to technology and periods unlocked, which had caused resentment among some other prisoners. The excellent support offered by the PLIs had the potential to be undermined if prisoners abused the trust they had been given. We were not confident that there was always enough oversight of prisoners in the most trusted positions.

Daily life

Expected outcomes: Prisoners live in a clean and decent environment and are aware of the rules and routines of the prison. They are provided with essential basic services, are consulted regularly and can apply for additional services and assistance. The complaints and redress processes are efficient and fair.

Living conditions

- 4.8 An enthusiastic and capable team of prisoners in the gardening party maintained the impressive outside areas, which were tidy and colourful.
- 4.9 The prison opened in 2001 and remained in good condition. All the wings were of the same design and were bright and reasonably spacious. We observed prisoners with cleaning jobs who were busy and told us that they took pride in maintaining high standards and having the chance to win the monthly cleanest wing competition. Confident staff appropriately challenged cleaners when work remained to be done and this was reinforced during his rounds by the director. This all contributed to a positive first impression when entering the wings and was reflected in our survey where almost every respondent said that landings, stairs and serveries were normally clean. The positive and effective approach to maintaining high standards of cleanliness was notable.



Colourful outside area (left) and the clean B wing

- 4.10 Fewer prisoners said that showers were usually clean. Some across the prison needed refurbishment with staining that wing workers told us was difficult to remove. Some of the showers had been updated, to make them brighter and more accessible (see paragraph 4.66).



E wing showers (one side refurbished)

- 4.11 The relatively stable population meant that most prisoners spent several years in the same cell and many had personalised their living space. All the cells that we viewed were adequately furnished.
- 4.12 A systematic refurbishment programme had started using a prisoner works party. Cells were entirely stripped and repainted to a high standard. It was commendable that the prison was able to continue this work despite the national population pressures which meant that cells

could not be emptied for refurbishment. Prisoners simply moved their belongings out during the day so that work could continue.



B wing cell (left) and refurbished cell on A wing

- 4.13 Cellular accommodation was generally of a good standard but there were still 64 single cells holding two prisoners in conditions that were too small for them to live with dignity. It had been recognised that sharing a cramped cell had been a factor in some incidents of violence. To address this in part, two televisions had been provided, each with a set of headphones, which was a positive step. Leaders said that once the new accommodation had been completed all the 'small doubles' would return to single occupancy.



E wing small double cell

- 4.14 In our survey, 79% of respondents said their cell call bell was normally answered within five minutes compared with 50% at the previous inspection and 54% at similar prisons. We saw staff responding promptly to such calls throughout the inspection. Managers scrutinised the response times and held wing staff to account for any that had not been answered within the target time. Making sure that this process worked effectively enhanced the safety of prisoners and also eliminated a source of friction that we often see.

Residential services

- 4.15 In our survey, 77% of respondents said that the food was good or better compared with 52% at comparable prisons.
- 4.16 Prisoners had regular opportunities to comment on the food through servery comments books, messaging the catering team using wing kiosks and regular food forums and surveys. This had resulted in changes to the menu and the catering manager had introduced a novel approach to decide which suggestions to adopt. A tasting session for prospective new menu items involved a small group of prisoners sampling a selection of the proposed new choices and the most popular were added to the menu. The event was covered by the prisoner-led media team who included a write up in the prison newspaper to keep the whole population informed (see paragraph 4.22).
- 4.17 The meal service was well supervised and we saw good portions being served. Servery workers did not always wear the correct clothing to comply with food hygiene standards.
- 4.18 Prisoners could attend the servery for toast in the mornings and there was a hot option on the menu at both lunch and dinner, which was positive. These meals were still served too early, with the first serving of lunch starting at about 11am. Prisoners could eat together at lunchtime during the week and at dinner at the weekend. Many chose to do so.
- 4.19 Kitchen staff working with the rehabilitative culture team had introduced a 'Ready, Steady, Learn to Cook' initiative. Six prisoners visited the staff kitchen each week and were instructed in the preparation and serving of a meal. There were realistic plans to expand this initiative to more prisoners.



Ready Steady Learn to Cook

- 4.20 The prison ran its own shop and, in our survey, 67% of respondents said it sold the things they needed. Deliveries were well managed, with mistakes quickly remedied, and there were fewer complaints than we usually see.
- 4.21 Prisoners were positive about being able to view items for purchase from a good range of catalogues and suppliers using a computer in the staff office on each wing.

Prisoner consultation, applications and redress

- 4.22 Arrangements for prisoner consultation were among the best we have seen. In our survey, 81% of prisoners said they were consulted and 66% said that things sometimes changed as a result, compared with 69% and 35% respectively in similar prisons.
- 4.23 Senior managers with responsibility for the various PLIs met mentors regularly to discuss themes, such as food and living conditions. During the inspection a consultation event was held to discuss plans for the new accommodation which was well attended by prisoners and staff. Video updates were recorded and senior managers chaired round-table discussion groups to address questions and concerns.



Consultation event about expansion of the prison

- 4.24 There were 25 peer representatives on the prisoner council, which ensured that all prisoners had regular access to one, either on the wing or at work or education. The representatives met weekly with the PLI manager to discuss and, where possible, address current issues. More complex matters were referred to the monthly meeting chaired by the Director and attended by members of the senior leadership team. Many proposals were allocated to a PLI mentor to develop a business case, and several had resulted in meaningful change, such as the televisions and headphones for double cells (see paragraph 4.13) and the all-weather sports pitch (see paragraph 5.10). The meeting was video recorded by peers from the media hub and shown on one of the prison TV channels for those who had not attended.
- 4.25 The media hub was well equipped and supported by a group of enthusiastic and skilled prisoners. A range of high-quality media were produced including audio briefings, the Rye Hill Times newspaper and a daily video blog from the director.



Media hub

- 4.26 Since the start of 2024, one of the PLI lead mentors had carried out a monthly prisoner survey, exploring all aspects of prison life, including perceptions of safety. This produced a considerable amount of potentially useful data, although managers had yet to arrange for analysis of the data.
- 4.27 The good time out of cell (see paragraph 5.1) and support from wing staff and PLIs (see paragraph 4.6) meant that prisoners could resolve many day-to-day issues informally. This eliminated the frustration arising from an inability to get things done that we often see. Prisoners could still use wing-based kiosks to submit applications for services or to ask questions of different departments. Prison data indicated that these were all dealt with promptly, which was supported by our survey findings.
- 4.28 There had been an average of 69 complaints a month over the previous 12 months, which as a rate per thousand was lower than all but five closed adult male prisons.
- 4.29 Most complaints were responded to punctually, but only 8% were upheld. Some of those we reviewed did not fully deal with the issues raised and in others it was not clear if the complaint had been upheld or reasons given if it had not been upheld. Almost 20% of those who had complained appealed against the finding.
- 4.30 Prisoners had good access to legal and professional visits. The Rye Hill community advice PLI offered non-professional advice and guidance on a range of civil matters and prison procedures.

Fair treatment and inclusion

Expected outcomes: There is a clear approach to promoting equality of opportunity, eliminating unlawful discrimination and fostering good relationships. The distinct needs of prisoners with particular protected characteristics (see Glossary), or those who may be at risk of discrimination or unequal treatment, are recognised and addressed. Prisoners are able to practise their religion. The chaplaincy plays a full part in prison life and contributes to prisoners' overall care, support and rehabilitation.

- 4.31 The culture of the prison was respectful and inclusive. The expectation that Rye Hill operated as a tolerant, diverse community was made clear from induction (see paragraph 3.5) and reinforced by staff and peer supporters.
- 4.32 Discriminatory or offensive language was challenged appropriately, using formal behaviour management processes where necessary. It was positive that, following such an incident, prisoners were offered opportunities to address their own prejudices, such as through one-to-one education sessions with a manager or supervised mediation with another prisoner.
- 4.33 Staff and prisoners were able to develop a mutual understanding of each other's backgrounds and experiences through a wide range of celebratory and educational events, including recent events for Black History Month, Jamaican Independence Day, and Pride.
- 4.34 Prisoners of all ages, backgrounds and levels of ability were able to participate meaningfully in the daily life of the prison. Education was available from entry level and ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) through to Open University, and the range of work and training opportunities allowed prisoners to use existing skills as well as develop new ones. All key parts of the prison were accessible to wheelchair users, who were ably supported by well-supervised carers (see paragraphs 4.6 and 4.67), and there was a dedicated workshop for retired or disabled prisoners which provided a range of recreational activities throughout the day and evening. This was particularly positive as it provided structure and enrichment for these groups who, in many prisons, have very little activity during the day and few chances to leave the wing or socialise with others.
- 4.35 In our survey, prisoners from most minority groups responded similarly to other prisoners in almost all areas.
- 4.36 However, prisoners from minority ethnic groups responded significantly more negatively in some key areas, including whether they were able to speak to a senior manager or director (65% compared to 89% of white prisoners), and whether applications and complaints were dealt with fairly (46% v 77% and 28% v 62% respectively).
- 4.37 A wide range of data were collected but not used well to identify potential areas of discrimination or drive improvement. For example,

minutes of key meetings relating to the use of segregation or use of force did not demonstrate analysis of relevant data. Some black prisoners told us they did not feel that they would be given the most trusted jobs (yellow, red and blue banded roles, where prisoners have greater autonomy and often work unsupervised). Leaders were aware of this belief and had undertaken data analysis in response. However, the outcome had not been shared with prisoners to dispel rumours, which was disappointing given the numerous communication channels used in the prison (see paragraph 4.22).

- 4.38 Support for veterans was a notable strength. Monthly meetings were productive and resulted in a range of events hosted by this group, such as charity clothing sales, film nights and commemoration events.
- 4.39 Support for foreign nationals remained a weakness. There was still too little translated written material around the prison, telephone interpretation was not widely used, and they did not have access to free, independent legal advice. Although most foreign nationals spoke a reasonable level of English, the small number who did not were vulnerable.

Faith and religion

- 4.40 Faith services and the pastoral care delivered by the chaplaincy remained a strength. A brand new chaplaincy building with impressive facilities had opened shortly before our inspection.
- 4.41 In our survey, 95% of prisoners said they were able to attend religious services and 87% that their religious beliefs were respected, against 86% and 73% at similar prisons.
- 4.42 The chaplaincy was visible throughout the prison and known by prisoners. They oversaw religious study groups, undertook one-to-one mentoring, visited prisoners in hospital, helped them apply to attend funerals (in person or remotely) and had facilitated weddings. They also ran a course which brought together prisoners of different faiths to talk about the history and meaning of their beliefs, to encourage mutual understanding and respect.
- 4.43 An active team of prisoner representatives supported the chaplaincy's work, for example by attending events to promote the faiths represented, the pastoral support available and the living with loss bereavement course run by the chaplaincy.

Health, well-being and social care

Expected outcomes: Patients are cared for by services that assess and meet their health, social care and substance use needs and promote continuity of care on release. The standard of provision is similar to that which patients could expect to receive elsewhere in the community.

- 4.44 The inspection of health services was jointly undertaken by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and HM Inspectorate of Prisons under a memorandum of understanding agreement between the agencies. The CQC found there were no breaches of the relevant regulations.

Strategy, clinical governance and partnerships

- 4.45 Practice Plus group (PPG) had been the health provider since October 2022, with Time for teeth delivering dental care and Forward Trust subcontracted to provide psychological support for substance misuse.
- 4.46 Overall, health care at Rye Hill was one of the better services we have inspected recently with good leadership at all levels of the team. In our survey, 82% of prisoners said that the quality of the service was good and access to all teams was above average and, in many cases, considerably so.
- 4.47 Partnership relationships were good and a recent quality visit had been made by NHS England. There were regular contract review meetings, but recent senior team vacancies had interrupted some of the local governance meetings. Actions were being taken to rectify this.
- 4.48 Despite this, there had been no resolution of the longstanding issue of the under-resourcing of escorts to the local hospital. The contractual requirement was that only 20 escorts per week were facilitated. More escorts were required regularly which led to cancellations. As many as 38% of them were cancelled due to a lack of staff, in addition to cancellations by the hospital. Delays were not always recorded on the incident reporting systems or analysed adequately to understand the impact for patients.
- 4.49 The senior team had a good understanding of the risks which were informed through incident reporting, complaints and patient feedback. Compliments outnumbered complaints and concerns and we saw helpful and compassionate responses. Staff had undertaken safeguarding training, but there was evidence of under-reporting of incidents and additional support was needed for staff to understand how safeguarding applied in a prison setting.
- 4.50 Most teams were fully staffed and vacancies were filled with agency and bank staff. Staff training rates were within PPG expected levels and staff were regularly reviewed for performance standards and encouraged to undertake reflective practice and supervision sessions in line with PPG policy.

- 4.51 All health care teams used the same individual health records system for recording assessments and interventions and standards for record keeping were good.
- 4.52 There was no evidence of medical equipment being regularly tested and calibrated. The provision for responding to unscheduled and emergency care was effective and well-equipped emergency bags were in place.

Promoting health and well-being

- 4.53 A whole-prison health promotion strategy was in place. Patients had access to appropriate health education and information and there were good links with community providers. A nurse oversaw the planning and delivery of a set monthly health promotion theme in line with national priorities. Peer support workers were well embedded and supported monthly initiatives (see paragraph 4.6).
- 4.54 Age-appropriate screenings were promoted. Vaccination uptake was strong, with good systems in place to increase numbers. Sexual health services were available and smoking cessation support was provided if needed. Arrangements were in place for outbreaks of communicable diseases.

Primary care and inpatient services

- 4.55 The primary care team comprised a clinical lead, advanced nurse practitioner, nurses and health care assistants. The team was fully resourced and well led. Patients were happy with the care they received from the primary care team.
- 4.56 New admissions were screened on the day of arrival by a nurse. A secondary screen was completed within seven days. Screenings we viewed were thorough and covered a wide range of patient need. Consent was gained appropriately and patient records from the community were sought in good time to inform treatment. Where ongoing health needs were identified, appropriate onward referrals were made.
- 4.57 Patients were easily able to access a good range of primary care services through an effective and well-managed electronic applications system. Waiting times were short which was reflected in our survey where 84% of the respondents said it was easy to see a nurse and 64% a doctor which were significantly better than at the previous inspection and at comparator prisons. Nurse and GP clinics were held each day and urgent care appointments were available on the day.
- 4.58 Patients with long-term conditions were identified promptly and managed well. Reviews took place at appropriate intervals and patients were cared for in the way they wished. Care plans were in place for all patients who required them and the plans that we viewed were thorough. Allied health professionals attended as required and met patients' needs in good time.

- 4.59 Patients with palliative and end-of-life needs received person-centred care in a safe and decent environment. Dedicated palliative care suites were used for patients which were clean and fit for purpose. An advanced nurse practitioner led on palliative care and made sure that patients had appropriate care plans. Patients told us they were happy with the care they received.
- 4.60 Records demonstrated that patients approaching the end of their sentence were identified and plans put in place to ensure continuity of care in the community.
- 4.61 Too many hospital appointments were cancelled because of a lack of prison staff to escort patients. During the previous three months, 62 appointments had been cancelled, which was unacceptable.

Social care

- 4.62 There was a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and an information-sharing protocol between West Northamptonshire Council (WNC), HMP Rye Hill and PPG, although these had not been signed by some partners.
- 4.63 All social care referrals were submitted electronically by the safer custody team. Patients had to ask if they wanted to be referred and there was very little information or promotion of this at wing level.
- 4.64 Thirty referrals had been made to WNC in the last year and nine patients were in receipt of a care package. PPG provided care both before and after WNC had completed their assessment and care plans. However, there were no designated timeframes from referral to assessment in the MOU and the prison did not follow up submitted referrals which resulted in patients facing long waits for occupational therapy assessments. This caused delays in receiving equipment essential to their daily activities. At the time of the inspection, 11 patients had been waiting. Some had waited nine weeks to be assessed, which was poor.
- 4.65 All patients had a care plan and those we spoke to were complimentary about the care they received. Carers had appropriate time allocated to complete their work and knew the patients well. We observed compassionate interactions with the patients.
- 4.66 There were cells for prisoners with disabilities on each wing which were well equipped: the showers had grab rails and non-slip mats (see paragraph 4.10).
- 4.67 The care activity support scheme (CASS) employed 15 prisoners to support patients with disabilities. They had a list of duties for each person which included cleaning their cell, collecting meals or making beds. There were no personal care duties. The CASS workers we spoke to said they enjoyed the role and were supported by a coordinator and the safer custody team (see paragraphs 4.7 and 4.34).

- 4.68 Personal alarms were available for prisoners to summon assistance in an emergency. Coordinated planning ensured that packages of care continued on transfer or release.

Mental health

- 4.69 PPG delivered a well-led and effective integrated mental health service, seven days a week. Referrals were received from all areas of the prison and were usually seen within five days and more urgent cases within 48 hours. All referred patients received an initial triage from a mental health nurse and were discussed at a multidisciplinary team meeting and assigned to a practitioner within a short timeframe.
- 4.70 At the time of the inspection, the team was supporting a case load of 71 patients (approximately 10% of the population) with a good standard of care. The mental health team used comprehensive templates on the clinical tree. The patient records that we viewed indicated timely reviews and risk assessments and the comprehensive care plans were updated when changes occurred.
- 4.71 There were still no allocated consultation rooms for the mental health team. Patients were seen on the wings and staff said it was difficult to find a confidential space. Although there were plans for space in the new building for the mental health team, the adequacy of the space for the uplift in population remained uncertain.
- 4.72 Levels of support were still developing and included a range of one-to-one sessions for lower intensity needs, such as low mood and anxiety management. The staff were being trained to deliver group programmes, but very little was available for patients requiring a higher level of intervention. A part-time psychologist had recently been recruited but was only able to offer therapeutic support to a very small number of patients with complex and challenging needs. This was not enough to meet the needs of the population.
- 4.73 There were two psychiatry sessions a week which were appropriately prioritised based on clinical need and risk. An advanced clinical practitioner supported the prescribing for patients and received supervision from the psychiatrist.
- 4.74 Nine patients with severe and enduring mental ill health at the time of the inspection were subject to close monitoring and support aligned with the provisions of the community mental health framework.
- 4.75 Two learning disability nurses worked effectively with the mental health team for three days a week supporting 42 patients with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism.
- 4.76 The clinical supervision of staff was well embedded and reflective practice sessions had recently been introduced, which were well received by staff.
- 4.77 There had been three referrals to hospital since December 2023, all of which had exceeded the specified time frames. This was unacceptable.

Support and treatment for prisoners with addictions and those who misuse substances

- 4.78 A well-led drug recovery service was delivering consistent interventions for those wishing to manage their addictions.
- 4.79 A recently published drug strategy was monitored at the security meetings, but these were not consistently attended by the drug services team. However, there was good communication between the prison and drug services teams concerning suspected drug use. All new prison custody officers received a half day training with Forward Trust staff to gain a better understanding of addictions and how to identify referrals.
- 4.80 All new arrivals were screened for drug and alcohol needs and those requiring further care were allocated promptly. No prisoners had required opiate substitution therapy in the last year, but a clinical prescriber was available if required.
- 4.81 Forward Trust delivered a range of interventions which included one-to-one, workbooks and groups in their bespoke unit. Patients with multiple care needs such as mental health and substance needs were cared for using a multidisciplinary approach and more complex cases were managed under the multi-professional complex case clinic.
- 4.82 Alcoholics Anonymous attended every week facilitated by Forward Trust and peer support was evident on all wings to assist new arrivals and point out relevant services (see paragraph 4.6).
- 4.83 Record keeping met expected standards, but the electronic waiting lists were not used enough. We saw clear care plans and risk management assessments and caseloads were easy to access.
- 4.84 Very few prisoners were released and even fewer locally, but joint working was in place to plan for this.
- 4.85 The drug recovery team provided other enrichment activities and bespoke jobs in the DART garden where prisoners grew a wide variety of flowers and food. Those in recovery were very grateful for this opportunity.

Medicines optimisation and pharmacy services

- 4.86 Medicines were supplied in a timely manner by an in-house pharmacy. Medicines that were not in possession were supplied on a named patient basis with appropriate labelling and a dispensing audit trail.
- 4.87 Prescribing and administration were recorded on the electronic clinical records.
- 4.88 Medicines were administered by pharmacy technicians and nurses from the wings twice a day with some provision for supply of night-time medicines when required. There was a confidential space for prisoners to take their medicines and good supervision of the medicine queues by officers. Patients were given advice about their medicines by the

pharmacy technicians when attending the hatch. Good interactions between staff and patients were observed. Staff followed up prisoners who did not attend for their medicines. The treatment rooms were small and hot in the summer and the medication hatches needed repair.

- 4.89 There was an in-possession policy and risk assessments were recorded appropriately and routinely reviewed after 12 months. Eighty per cent of the population were able to receive their medicines in possession, most of whom were given a 28-day supply.
- 4.90 The pharmacists clinically reviewed all medicines to provide support and oversight and ensure compliance with the formulary (a list of medications used to inform prescribing). Patients could ask to see the pharmacist who ran regular clinics to review medication. He was also an independent prescriber and wrote repeat prescriptions and supported the prescribing team when necessary.
- 4.91 There was limited scope to use patient group directions to supply medicines without the need to see a doctor, although nurses delivered a triage clinic for minor ailments. The out-of-hours cupboard stocked a very limited range of medicines with no over-labelled medicines which meant that urgent out-of-hours medicines had to be sourced from pharmacies outside the prison. There were procedures for patients who left the prison.
- 4.92 The pharmacy was very small and cramped. Medicines management on the wings was largely good, but controlled drug registers were signed at the end of the shift rather than after administration.
- 4.93 Errors were recorded on Datix (the electronic incident reporting system) and reviewed. Written procedures and protocols were in place. The prescribing of tradeable medicines was well controlled but there was higher than expected prescribing of mirtazapine which needed to be reviewed.
- 4.94 Medicines management meetings were not always attended by the pharmacist and did not reflect the existing oversight of the service. There were plans to improve this.

Dental services and oral health

- 4.95 Overall, the dental service was good. In our survey, 56% of prisoners said it was easy to see the dentist compared with 32% in similar prisons and they also felt that the quality of the service had considerably improved since our last inspection. The dental surgery was in use all week and included sessions with a dentist and a therapist who gave dental health advice during the session.
- 4.96 Most prisoners waited less than nine weeks for treatment to begin. This timeframe included the initial dental assessment. Urgent care was provided within 24 hours during the week.
- 4.97 A full range of NHS treatment was provided. Clinical records showed comprehensive oral health assessments and treatment plans. Referrals

for treatment in the community were sent promptly but community waiting lists prevented timely hospital care. We found patients waiting for more than 18 months for complex extractions under general anaesthetic.

- 4.98 The dental surgery lacked separate decontamination facilities and air extraction and was starting to show wear and tear. This was partially mitigated by thorough cleaning, but prompt refurbishment would be needed to cater for the planned increase in the prison population. Essential professional standards were met and equipment was well maintained.

Section 5 Purposeful activity

Prisoners are able and expected to engage in activity that is likely to benefit them.

Time out of cell

Expected outcomes: All prisoners have sufficient time out of cell (see Glossary) and are encouraged to engage in recreational and social activities which support their well-being and promote effective rehabilitation.

- 5.1 Almost all prisoners were allocated to full-time work or education and had about nine hours a day unlocked. In our survey, 73% of respondents said that lock up times were usually kept to compared to 60% at comparable prisons. During our roll checks we found less than 1% of prisoners locked in their cells during the core day.
- 5.2 The 38 older prisoners who had chosen to retire were unlocked during the day, which was positive. Staff encouraged the small number on the basic level of the incentives scheme to attend work and we found that they did so (see paragraph 3.14).
- 5.3 Most wing cleaners and peer mentors were visibly occupied which we do not often see at other prisons.
- 5.4 All prisoners could access a period of exercise on the yard, which contained exercise equipment. They also had a period of association each day, although each wing was only allowed association one landing at a time. This limited the time unlocked and was a source of frustration for some. Prison leaders said that the regime was delivered in this way because it was more conducive to older prisoners participating in association, although they were unable to provide evidence to show that this was achieved.
- 5.5 Wings were equipped with pool and snooker tables as well as puzzles and board games. The activity centre was open each evening with a varied timetable of pastimes and enrichment activities such as chess, art and reading classes. In addition, a regular schedule of enrichment activity had been arranged, such as lectures from visiting academics. This was better than we usually see at other inspections.
- 5.6 Access to the library was good and it was well used. In our survey, 84% of respondents said they were able to visit the library once a week or more compared with 66% at the previous inspection and 61% at similar prisons. Prisoners could also order books via wing kiosks which were delivered to the wings by one of the enthusiastic library peer mentors.



Queue to borrow items from the library

- 5.7 The library had a reasonable stock of books, CDs, DVDs and games, although there was a limited range of material in languages other than English (see paragraph 4.39). Prisoners also attended the library to use the IT facilities for the further education courses. The librarian and mentors supported initiatives to promote literacy, including a book club and writing club (see paragraph 5.20), as well as the 'raising readers' initiative, which encouraged prisoners to read with their children (see paragraph 6.5).
- 5.8 The gym was being renovated at the time of the inspection. A temporary timetable had been implemented to maximise availability and many prisoners could access the facilities five times a week or more, although the timetable included sessions during the core day, which meant that some prisoners left work to attend.



The gym

- 5.9 Gym sessions were supplemented by outdoor exercise, such as running and walking clubs and sports on the all-weather pitch. Prisoners could also use the equipment on the wing yards.
- 5.10 Gym staff arranged a twice weekly 'mature gathering' where prisoners could do activities like darts and bowls. Some prisoners who had previously not engaged with the gym had received valuable encouragement and support from the community engagement PE instructor, such as taking them for a walk.



A/B exercise yard

- 5.11 Gym staff were not delivering any courses during the renovation because there was no classroom space.

Education, skills and work activities



This part of the report is written by Ofsted inspectors using Ofsted's inspection framework, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>.

Ofsted inspects the provision of education, skills and work in custodial establishments using the same inspection framework and methodology it applies to further education and skills provision in the wider community. This covers four areas: quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management. The findings are presented in the order of the learner journey in the establishment. Together with the areas of concern, provided in the summary section of this report, this constitutes Ofsted's assessment of what the establishment does well and what it needs to do better.

- 5.12 Ofsted made the following assessments about the education, skills and work provision:

Overall effectiveness: Good

Quality of education: Good

Behaviour and attitudes: Good

Personal development: Good

Leadership and management: Good

- 5.13 Leaders and managers strategically focused on creating an effective community for rehabilitation. They provided full-time work, training, education and personal development activities for each prisoner. All prisoners under retirement age were allocated to full-time work which they attended diligently. Leaders successfully encouraged the many retired prisoners to participate in the wide range of peer-led enrichment initiatives. As a result, almost all prisoners were engaged in purposeful activity throughout the whole of the working week. Outside work, managers supported prisoners to organise an extensive programme of other activities, for example art, charity and walking clubs, which enabled prisoners to participate in events similar to those outside prison.
- 5.14 The range and number of education and work places available was appropriate for this type of prison, but there were insufficient places available for the growing number of category C prisoners who needed vocational skill training. Leaders had identified the urgent need to rectify this deficit and new vocational training workshops in brickwork, barbering, multi-skills and forklift truck had been built and were planned to be opened in January 2025. Leaders and managers had also successfully supported higher-level learning by boosting distance learning courses. Around one in 10 prisoners studied in this way, including 40 on Open University courses.
- 5.15 Leaders had successfully addressed the areas of weakness identified in the previous inspection. In the last two years the new leadership team had acted incisively to improve the quality of teaching and the support for prisoners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD). Managers revised the prison's local pay policy to give significant financial incentives for prisoners to undertake educational courses, along with rewarding prisoners who achieved a qualification.
- 5.16 Prison-wide careers, information, advice and guidance (CIAG) supported prisoners well to determine the most appropriate choice of purposeful activities. Induction was thorough with comprehensive assessments of prisoners' starting points in English, mathematics, reading and neurodiversity needs. Allocations to activities were efficient with due regard to these assessments and to prisoners' sentence plans. Prisoners received timely and appropriate CIAG throughout their sentence. Advisers structured guidance meetings well. Prisoners understood how to develop their knowledge and skills as a result of meaningful, individualised discussions. They also developed useful digital skills to support their next steps. Prior to release, prisoners made good use of the virtual campus to complete activities such as mock driving theory tests, writing CVs and researching job opportunities.

- 5.17 Novus provided the education, most vocational training and the library provision in the prison. Managers planned courses logically so that prisoners made progress from studying basic knowledge and skills to more complex and challenging concepts and tasks. Experienced and well-qualified teachers assessed what prisoners already knew to plan interesting lessons which met their individual needs. For example, in English one group of students developed their punctuation skills by correcting text with many deliberate mistakes. Others with higher skill levels came to understand the technique of persuasion by practising writing formal letters in legal scenarios. Teachers checked prisoners' progress frequently and gave helpful guidance to enable them to improve. In vocational training, prisoners produced work of a high standard. For example, in horticulture, prisoners produced well-presented and accurate portfolios which was matched by skilled practical work as they worked, often independently, in the colourful and well-tended gardens. Overall, prisoners achieved well in external examinations. English pass rates were particularly high.
- 5.18 Leaders and managers had established an expectation of very high attendance and punctuality throughout all education, skills and work activities. All prison staff supported the efficient and timely movement of prisoners to enable their consistent participation in activities. All education, skills and work sessions visited had full attendance with no absences other than those which were agreed to enable prisoners' attendance at essential appointments, for example in health or with solicitors. Leaders assiduously reviewed the previous day's attendance for each activity at daily management meetings. The very few unaccounted absences were rigorously investigated and resolved. Through this approach, prisoners developed the valuable employment skills of good attendance and punctuality.
- 5.19 Prisoners benefited from very effective additional support within all education, skills and work activities. Teachers had a clear awareness of prisoner need, and prisoners themselves understood how best these challenges could be overcome. When appropriate, teachers and instructors used support strategies which enabled prisoners to overcome barriers to learning. Teachers and instructors gave prisoners extra time to complete activities. The many peer mentors who had received training in LDD gave much individual and well-considered support. Prisoners became more accurate when completing written work on the wings, for example completing application forms or making canteen orders. They grew in confidence with wider communications such as discussions with doctors and probation officers. Prisoners with additional needs made progress and achieved at a similar rate to their peers.
- 5.20 Commercial workshops employed prisoners gainfully in packing, basic assembly and first level woodwork construction. Prisoners developed a limited range of new vocational skills though managers included team leader, supervisory and quality assurance roles to provide progression in employment. Prisoners designated as wing cleaners also undertook food service duties. These prisoners worked to high standards and rightly took much pride in their work. Prison staff supported prisoners

effectively to record their activities and progress in individual skills passports.

- 5.21 Leaders and managers had adopted a successful whole prison approach to developing the reading skills of prisoners. Managers had secured the comprehensive assessment of prisoners' reading skills. Those requiring help to become functional readers were referred to an enthusiastic and trained Shannon Trust team. Teachers and trainers placed a high priority on reading in education and industry. During frequent sessions branded 'Drop Everything and Read', all prisoners put down tools, stopped their other work or set aside their education and read a book or magazine from a 'mini library' which existed in each classroom, workshop and accommodation wing. This routine was greatly enjoyed by the prisoners, many of whom looked forward to their reading slot. Staff recorded and monitored this activity and prisoners' progress on a reading card. Prison officers also encouraged reading within the accommodation units and recorded progress in prisoners' skill passports. Prisoners from the travelling community made particularly good progress within a discrete group. Four voluntary book clubs met frequently and the number of prisoners with the lowest reading skills had halved.
- 5.22 Leaders had devised a well-planned personal development curriculum that met the specific needs of the prison population. For example, they provided courses on anger management, mental health awareness, drug and alcohol awareness, customer service and mindfulness art. Leaders had a dynamic approach to the personal development curriculum. They frequently changed the offer and maintained a variety of opportunities appropriate to demand. Prisoners articulated well how they developed skills as active citizens and recognised democracy, respect, mutual tolerance and liberty in relation to the prison community.
- 5.23 The very extensive range of enrichment activities enabled prisoners, including the retired, to broaden and discover their wider talents. Leaders provided a broad range of enrichment activities that supported the needs and interests of the prison population, for example chess, reading, homework and football clubs. Peer-led projects provided prisoners with the opportunity to contribute significantly to the prison community, for example through the prison council. A newly established education club for prisoners from Roma and travelling communities provided outreach education for a group disinclined to attend formal lessons. Daily activity workshops for retired prisoners and those with long-term ill health enabled 'buddies' to support their peers in creative and leisure pursuits. This not only provided interest but also kept older prisoners' minds alert and active.
- 5.24 Leaders and managers maintained effective oversight of the quality of education, skills and work. Thorough quality assurance processes, overseen by a well-attended quality improvement group, ensured both accurate identification of areas of concern and the monitoring of progress towards their rectification. Observations of learning in both education and industries, many undertaken jointly by prison staff and

the education provider, led to relevant action plans and staff professional development. For example, observations showed that target setting in the skills passports was not effective. As a consequence, all prison staff received in-depth guidance regarding target setting. Follow-up learning walks (see Glossary) by leaders and managers found that targets were more precise, individually relevant and included time frames for achievement.

- 5.25 Leaders and managers set high expectations and standards for prisoners' behaviour and conduct. Prisoners in education, skills and work were well behaved, polite, and had respectful relationships with peers and staff. Workshops and classrooms were calm, well ordered and conducive to learning and work. Prisoners worked purposefully, had positive attitudes to learning and participated well in tasks and activity. Leaders had provided an environment in which prisoners felt safe. Managers had provided sufficient personal protective equipment which prisoners used conscientiously in workshops and on the wings. Prisoners working in the kitchens and on the accommodation serveries had all received thorough food hygiene and safety training, including allergen awareness. They demonstrated and practised a good understanding of food safety, for example routinely checking food temperatures to ensure the danger of infection was minimised.

Section 6 Preparation for release

Preparation for release is understood as a core function of the prison. Prisoners are supported to maintain and develop relationships with their family and friends. Prisoners are helped to reduce their likelihood of reoffending and their risk of harm is managed effectively. Prisoners are prepared for their release back into the community.

Children and families and contact with the outside world

Expected outcomes: The prison understands the importance of family ties to resettlement and reducing the risk of reoffending. The prison promotes and supports prisoners' contact with their families and friends. Programmes aimed at developing parenting and relationship skills are facilitated by the prison. Prisoners not receiving visits are supported in other ways to establish or maintain family support.

- 6.1 Rye Hill housed prisoners from all over the country which could make visiting prisoners difficult. Despite this, and in line with the respectful culture of the prison, 93% of prisoners said that their families were treated with respect and 70% said staff had encouraged them to keep in touch with family and friends, significantly higher than at similar prisons.
- 6.2 With 65% of the population not receiving visits from family and friends, leaders had been innovative, introducing an internal visiting session. Every Thursday, prisoners from this cohort could book a visit with another prisoner of their choice. This allowed them to experience the visits setting, while enjoying refreshments and had led to full capacity at the 15 visiting sessions offered each week.
- 6.3 Social visits took place five afternoons a week, including at weekends. There were enough slots to meet demand, and sessions usually lasted between two to three hours.
- 6.4 Investment had been made in the visits hall since our last inspection. Furniture had been upgraded to more comfortable seating, televisions mounted to the wall and decorative art displays softened the environment. There was a range of age-specific activities for children and families could buy hot and cold refreshments. The support offered by the two peer workers for the visits area was impressive.



Visits hall



Children's play area in the visits hall

- 6.5 There were several ways for prisoners to contact the outside world. They could write to their families free of charge, in-cell phones allowed daily calls, and secure video visits (see Glossary) were offered alongside the social visits timetable in suitably private booths. Prisoners were supported to read to their children during these visits with the 'raising readers' initiative offered by the library (see paragraphs

5.8 and 5.20). Approximately 45% of the population were using secure video calls.

- 6.6 A range of family days were offered each month, designed to be inclusive for all children and families, with additional themed events during festive periods such as Christmas and Halloween. These events were well planned and popular.

Reducing reoffending

Expected outcomes: Prisoners are helped to change behaviours that contribute to offending. Staff help prisoners to demonstrate their progress.

- 6.7 Partnership working across the prison was collaborative and effective in helping prisoners get the most from their time at Rye Hill. This was reflected in our survey where 83% of prisoners compared with 68% at the last inspection said their experiences in this prison had made them less likely to offend in the future. Prisoners were encouraged to create and retain evidence of their progression and we noted many prisoners with organised folders of certificates and other material related to their progression work.
- 6.8 The head of community engagement was responsible for maintaining oversight of the reducing reoffending strategy, which set out work to address each resettlement pathway. This was based on a good understanding of the population needs and leaders had developed an action plan to monitor and drive work to improve outcomes for prisoners.
- 6.9 A particularly impressive initiative was the 'making sense of a long sentence' (MSOALS) programme. This was initially introduced to support prisoners serving a life sentence or those imprisoned indefinitely but was now used for all prisoners. A long sentence was divided into four distinctive phases which gave prisoners a better understanding of their position in terms of progression. This helped manage expectations and gave prisoners a purpose.
- 6.10 Each phase was supported by a range of interventions and activities, with regular events attended by internal and community partners to raise awareness of prisoners' rights, responsibilities and where to obtain support and guidance. During our inspection, a phase four event dealing with resettlement was attended by 150 prisoners and feedback was positive. MSOALS was supported by high quality written material and each session was led by a key worker. Prisoners we met were all aware of MSOALS and most found it useful.
- 6.11 The offender management unit (OMU) was well led and staff worked hard to drive positive outcomes for prisoners despite managing challenging workloads which were often affected by cross-deployment of the prison offender managers (POMs). This was exacerbated by the increase in population churn and the impact of policy changes, the most recent of which was the SDS40 scheme (allowing offenders with

standard determinate sentences to be released after they have served 40% of their term). The first tranche of releases for SDS40 had been due in September 2024.

- 6.12 In contrast to our last inspection, a senior probation officer was now in post, supported by seven probation officers. There was good evidence of joint working between prison-employed POMs and their probation counterparts. They worked in pairs supported by a dedicated case administrator to form a 'pod'. Cases were almost all high or very high risk of serious harm and were appropriately allocated to a probation POM who co-worked each case with the prison POM. Each pod was based on a wing in a dedicated OMU office which improved visibility and access.
- 6.13 We found the level of recorded contact between POM and prisoner to be appropriately variable and good overall. All prisoners were allocated to a POM within two days of arrival and were seen soon afterwards for an initial meeting. Contact with OMU had improved in recent months with the introduction of OMU surgeries twice a week on each wing. These surgeries had been put in place following feedback from prisoners about the difficulty of accessing the OMU.
- 6.14 Prisoners had a good awareness of their sentence planning and felt supported by staff in achieving sentence plan targets. In our survey, 88% of prisoners who had a sentence plan said they knew what their objectives were and 94% of these said they understood what they needed to do to achieve them.
- 6.15 All prisoners in our sample had an assessment of their risk and needs (OASys, offender assessment system). We examined 20 cases in detail, most of which had had an OASys assessment within the last 12 months. It was disappointing to find three cases with the most recent OASys dating back more than five years.
- 6.16 Key work was good (see paragraph 4.5). Entries covered a number of areas such as safety, interests, British values, MSOALS and reading strategy, but this planned approach led to some repetitive or duplicated entries. Rye Hill maintained a notable focus on keeping consistency of individual key workers with each prisoner. However, in several cases the key worker was absent for periods, often through deployment to HMP Five Wells, and at those times a fellow key worker covered the sessions. Overall, key work was good, but it was not fully integrated with OMU work to support sentence planning.
- 6.17 At the time of the inspection, around 90 prisoners were serving a life or indeterminate sentence for public protection (IPP), and their cases were appropriately overseen by probation-employed POMs. Parole arrangements were well managed and dossiers were usually submitted on time. In the last 12 months, 84 Parole Board hearings had been held, 23 of which had resulted in prisoners being released into the community.

- 6.18 Prison-employed POMs regularly reviewed prisoners' security category. We looked at a sample of re-categorisation decisions which were fair and justified. The recent introduction of category D boards (a panel hearing to assess suitability for the lowest security category) was a positive initiative which supported prisoners who had demonstrated suitable progression to downgrade their category. Most were transferred in a reasonable time.

Public protection

Expected outcomes: Prisoners' risk of serious harm to others is managed effectively. Prisoners are helped to reduce high risk of harm behaviours.

- 6.19 Rye Hill only housed prisoners convicted of sexual offences, most of whom were assessed as either high or very high risk of serious harm and were subject to multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) due to their offences. About three-quarters were assessed as a continuing risk to children, making public protection particularly important.
- 6.20 Two staff members were dedicated to public protection work. New arrivals were appropriately screened to distinguish between those who required restrictions on their contact with the outside world, for example prisoners with active harassment orders, and those who potentially posed a risk to children. Such prisoners were identified, assessed and restrictions applied in reasonable timeframes.
- 6.21 At the time of our inspection, 15 prisoners were subject to contact restrictions, either by phone or mail, and it was disappointing to see that, with the exception of one case, no action had been taken when there were breaches of these restrictions (see paragraph 3.33). This substantially undermined public protection arrangements.
- 6.22 All prisoners were subject to MAPPA on release and were included on ViSOR (Violent and Sex Offender Register). We found sufficient evidence of the notification of MAPPA levels in advance of a prisoner's release and of appropriate risk management being discussed and implemented by the POM and community offender manager (COM). However, the MAPPA levels were not consistently clear on the prison's electronic alerts page which was necessary for communicating effectively.
- 6.23 We examined 10 MAPPA reports completed by POMs for community MAPPA meetings and found them to be good overall. Standards and style varied among POMs but reports were appropriately countersigned and timely.
- 6.24 The monthly interdepartmental risk management team (IRMT) meeting maintained oversight of other areas of public protection arrangements. The team reviewed information about the risks and needs associated with newly arrived prisoners, those applying for a change to their contact restrictions and prisoners due for release, the number of whom

had increased over time (see paragraph 6.31). The records of this meeting did not always clearly document discussions or record the completion of actions.

- 6.25 There was a particular focus on preparing more effectively for prisoners being released, which was an improvement since the last inspection. In many cases we observed a three-way video-link handover meeting at around the nine-month pre-release point. This was key to enabling the COM to make an early start on public protection work for this wholly MAPPA population and to be ready to engage with resettlement tasks.

Interventions and support

Expected outcomes: Prisoners are able to access support and interventions designed to reduce reoffending and promote effective resettlement.

- 6.26 Rye Hill was a national provider of accredited programmes for prisoners convicted of sexual offences and many prisoners transferred from establishments around the country to complete courses.
- 6.27 A good range of accredited interventions were offered which were appropriate for the population. Interventions to address the likelihood of reoffending and risk of harm were specifically targeted to those convicted of sexual offences. They included accredited treatment programmes for high- and medium-risk offenders.
- 6.28 Rye Hill offered the building better relationships course which was not usually delivered in prisons housing sexual offenders. They were also the only prison to offer a 'maintaining new me' course for prisoners who had taken the original course some years previously. The course was used as a refresher for those approaching parole or their release date.
- 6.29 Prisoners were assigned to accredited programmes in accordance with national instructions and waiting lists were not excessive. The programmes team was well resourced and well led by the programmes manager. The team maintained good oversight of the treatment needs of the population by updating a needs analysis each month.
- 6.30 Prisoners spoke confidently about completing programmes relevant to their offending needs. About 40% of prisoners were maintaining their innocence and it was positive to see that these prisoners could access the full range of courses.

Returning to the community

Expected outcomes: Prisoners' specific reintegration needs are met through good multi-agency working to maximise the likelihood of successful resettlement on release.

- 6.31 Despite Rye Hill not being a designated resettlement prison, around six prisoners were released into the community each month, which was about twice the number at the last inspection.
- 6.32 Where required under the OMiC model (see Glossary), attempts were always made for responsibility for a prisoner's case to be handed from the POM to the COM at the appropriate time. This was pursued effectively by Rye Hill staff, but the difficulties of releasing prisoners nationwide were apparent. Several cases were noted in which a COM had not been allocated until much nearer to the point of release. In such cases, Rye Hill staff escalated the case appropriately.
- 6.33 In the absence of a resettlement function, a very passionate and dedicated resettlement peer mentor provided an impressive range of resettlement support under the guidance of the OMU manager. This included opening bank accounts, obtaining right to work documents and other functions that a prisoner might need help with. The peer mentor was visible and actively promoted his role to prison staff as well as building relationships with community partners to support resettlement planning for prisoners. He had been training his successor for several months before his own release which was good succession planning.
- 6.34 Most prisoners were released to approved premises. No prisoners had been released homeless, which was positive, but the majority were not discharged to sustainable accommodation.

Section 7 Progress on recommendations from the last full inspection report

Recommendations from the last full inspection

The following is a summary of the main findings from the last full inspection report and a list of all the recommendations made, organised under the four tests of a healthy prison.

Safety

Prisoners, particularly the most vulnerable, are held safely.

At the last inspection in 2019, support for new arrivals was very good. Violence and bullying reduction work was managed reasonably well and peer support initiatives were excellent. Levels of violence remained low. The adjudications process was used frequently and the number of incidents involving force was high and not always necessary. Conditions in the segregation unit were reasonable, but reintegration planning needed to improve. Security arrangements were good and the use of illicit drugs was not widespread. The number of self-harm incidents had declined but was still relatively high, although a very small number of prisoners accounted for a significant number of these incidents. Care for prisoners in crisis was good. Outcomes for prisoners were good against this healthy prison test.

Key recommendation

The prison should explore the reasons why almost a third of prisoners felt unsafe and effective action should be taken to improve safety and prisoners' perceptions of it.

Achieved

Respect

Prisoners are treated with respect for their human dignity.

At the last inspection in 2019, staff-prisoner working relationships were positive. The prison remained very clean and living conditions were good. The impressive garden areas encouraged well-being and peer-led initiatives provided valuable support and promoted the positive community ethos of Rye Hill. The food and shop were both good. Consultation arrangements were useful, but the applications system was not fully effective. Equality and diversity work had seen some improvements, but the negative perceptions of some groups of prisoners had not been addressed and support was variable. Provision for those who were older or disabled was, however, very good. Faith provision was a strength. Health services

were reasonably good overall. Outcomes for prisoners were reasonably good against this healthy prison test.

Key recommendations

Black and minority ethnic prisoners' negative perceptions about staff-prisoner relationships should be explored and addressed, and better analysis of monitoring data should be undertaken to identify and address any disproportionate outcomes.

Not achieved

Health staff should have prompt and reliable access to SystmOne so they can deliver health services in a safe and timely manner.

Achieved

Recommendations

The toilet area in all cells should have adequate privacy screening.

Achieved

Prisoners should be able to submit paper applications confidentially and receive a timely response.

Achieved

The equality strategy should be specific to the needs of the prisoners held at the establishment. Action planning should detail the priorities for improvement and demonstrate progress over time.

Not achieved

The prison should ensure professional telephone interpretation is used when needed.

Not achieved

The prison should explore the concerns of prisoners with disabilities, particularly their concerns about safety.

Achieved

All staff should consistently receive mandatory training within the allocated timeframe and have the appropriate professional skills and competencies to deliver health services.

Achieved

Patients with mental health problems should have access to an appropriate range of support that meets their identified needs, including group work and psychologically informed interventions.

Not achieved

Patients requiring a transfer under the Mental Health Act should be assessed promptly and transferred within the current transfer guidelines.

Not achieved

A clear policy and pathway for patients experiencing substance use and mental health problems should be developed.

Achieved

Purposeful activity

Prisoners are able, and expected, to engage in activity that is likely to benefit them.

At the last inspection in 2019, most prisoners had a good amount of time out of their cells during the week, and we found very few locked up during the working day. The daily regime was delivered reliably and was enhanced by a positive range of constructive recreational activities. The activity centre was a particularly valuable resource for older and more vulnerable prisoners. The library had improved overall, but gym sessions were held during the working day, which had an impact on attendance at activities. While prison, education and training leaders worked well together, education, skills and work activities required improvement in some fundamental areas, such as attendance, support for those with additional learning needs and the achievement of functional skills qualifications in English and maths. Outcomes for prisoners were reasonably good against this healthy prison test.

Key recommendations

Leaders and managers should ensure weaknesses in education, skills and work are addressed, ensuring all prisoners who need to improve their English and mathematics skills study appropriate qualifications, receive suitable careers advice and guidance, and are allocated to activities that better meet the objectives of their sentence plans.

Achieved

Leaders and managers should ensure that prisoners who have additional learning needs have access to specialist support to enable them to make the progress expected of them.

Achieved

Recommendations

Daytime recreational PE should not be timetabled for prisoners who should be attending work or training.

Not achieved

The library and gym departments should gather sufficient data so they can establish trends and ensure all groups within the prison population have equal access to their facilities.

Achieved

Leaders and managers should review the pay policy to ensure that prisoners are not discouraged from studying education on the grounds of pay.

Achieved

Leaders and managers must ensure that teachers and instructors take account of prisoners' individual needs when planning their sessions, which should include setting individual targets.

Achieved

Leaders and managers should ensure the proportion of prisoners who attend their activities increases significantly.

Achieved

Rehabilitation and release planning

Prisoners are supported to maintain and develop relationships with their family and friends. Prisoners are helped to reduce their likelihood of reoffending and their risk of harm is managed effectively. Prisoners are prepared for their release back into the community.

At the last inspection in 2019, the provision for visits remained good, but the promotion of family ties was insufficient. A needs analysis supported the reducing reoffending strategy. Almost all prisoners had an offender assessment system (OASys) report and sentence plan and the majority knew what they had to do to progress. Prisoners had regular contact with key workers. The prison worked hard to progress prisoners on to other establishments. Contact restrictions were well managed, but the inter-departmental risk management team (IDRMT) was not effective. Accredited programme places were managed well. Demand for resettlement help was very low, but there was some support and advice, including counselling for prisoners who had been victims of abuse. Outcomes for prisoners were good against this healthy prison test.

Key recommendation

Risk management planning for prisoners due for release should be improved, with planning starting several months before the actual release date.

Achieved

Recommendations

The prison should improve the support prisoners and their families receive to help build and maintain good family relationships.

Achieved

Offender supervisors managing high risk of harm cases should be adequately trained including in the management of prisoners convicted of sexual offences and the delivery of one-to-one work to motivate prisoners to participate in programmes.

Not achieved

The transfer of prisoners convicted of sexual offences in preparation for release or for sentence progression should not be delayed.

Achieved

The counselling provision at Rye Hill should meet the demand.

Not achieved

Prisoners should receive more support to prepare them for release, including plans for how they will get to their release address.

Achieved

Appendix I About our inspections and reports

HM Inspectorate of Prisons is an independent, statutory organisation which reports on the treatment and conditions of those detained in prisons, young offender institutions, secure training centres, immigration detention facilities, court custody and military detention.

All inspections carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons contribute to the UK's response to its international obligations under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). OPCAT requires that all places of detention are visited regularly by independent bodies – known as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) – which monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees. HM Inspectorate of Prisons is one of several bodies making up the NPM in the UK.

All Inspectorate of Prisons reports carry a summary of the conditions and treatment of prisoners, based on the four tests of a healthy prison that were first introduced in this Inspectorate's thematic review *Suicide is everyone's concern*, published in 1999. For men's prisons the tests are:

Safety

Prisoners, particularly the most vulnerable, are held safely.

Respect

Prisoners are treated with respect for their human dignity.

Purposeful activity

Prisoners are able, and expected, to engage in activity that is likely to benefit them.

Preparation for release

Preparation for release is understood as a core function of the prison. Prisoners are supported to maintain and develop relationships with their family and friends. Prisoners are helped to reduce their likelihood of reoffending and their risk of harm is managed effectively. Prisoners are prepared for their release back into the community.

Under each test, we make an assessment of outcomes for prisoners and therefore of the establishment's overall performance against the test. There are four possible judgements: in some cases, this performance will be affected by matters outside the establishment's direct control, which need to be addressed by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

Outcomes for prisoners are good.

There is no evidence that outcomes for prisoners are being adversely affected in any significant areas.

Outcomes for prisoners are reasonably good.

There is evidence of adverse outcomes for prisoners in only a small number of areas. For the majority, there are no significant

concerns. Procedures to safeguard outcomes are in place.

Outcomes for prisoners are not sufficiently good.

There is evidence that outcomes for prisoners are being adversely affected in many areas or particularly in those areas of greatest importance to the well-being of prisoners. Problems/concerns, if left unattended, are likely to become areas of serious concern.

Outcomes for prisoners are poor.

There is evidence that the outcomes for prisoners are seriously affected by current practice. There is a failure to ensure even adequate treatment of and/or conditions for prisoners. Immediate remedial action is required.

Our assessments might result in identification of **areas of concern**. Key concerns identify the areas where there are significant weaknesses in the treatment of and conditions for prisoners. To be addressed they will require a change in practice and/or new or redirected resources. Priority concerns are those that inspectors believe are the most urgent and important and which should be attended to immediately. Key concerns and priority concerns are summarised at the beginning of inspection reports and the body of the report sets out the issues in more detail.

We also provide examples of **notable positive practice** in our reports. These list innovative work or practice that leads to particularly good outcomes from which other establishments may be able to learn. Inspectors look for evidence of good outcomes for prisoners; original, creative or particularly effective approaches to problem-solving or achieving the desired goal; and how other establishments could learn from or replicate the practice.

Five key sources of evidence are used by inspectors: observation; prisoner and staff surveys; discussions with prisoners; discussions with staff and relevant third parties; and documentation. During inspections we use a mixed-method approach to data gathering and analysis, applying both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Evidence from different sources is triangulated to strengthen the validity of our assessments.

Other than in exceptional circumstances, all our inspections are unannounced and include a follow up of recommendations from the previous inspection.

All inspections of prisons are conducted jointly with Ofsted or Estyn (Wales), the Care Quality Commission and the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC). Some are also conducted with HM Inspectorate of Probation. This joint work ensures expert knowledge is deployed in inspections and avoids multiple inspection visits.

This report

This report outlines the priority and key concerns from the inspection and our judgements against the four healthy prison tests. There then follow four sections each containing a detailed account of our findings against our *Expectations*. *Criteria for assessing the treatment of and conditions for men in prisons* (Version 6, 2023) (available on our website at [Expectations – HM Inspectorate](#))

[of Prisons \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)). Section 7 lists the recommendations from the previous full inspection (and scrutiny visit where relevant), and our assessment of whether they have been achieved.

Findings from the survey of prisoners and a detailed description of the survey methodology can be found on our website (see Further resources). Please note that we only refer to comparisons with other comparable establishments or previous inspections when these are statistically significant. The significance level is set at 0.01, which means that there is only a 1% chance that the difference in results is due to chance.

Inspection team

This inspection was carried out by:

Charlie Taylor	Chief inspector
Angus Jones	Team leader
Ian Dickens	Inspector
Lindsay Jones	Inspector
David Owens	Inspector
Nadia Syed	Inspector
Martyn Griffiths	Inspector
Samantha Moses	Researcher
Adeoluwa Okufuwa	Researcher
Sam Rasor	Researcher
Joe Simmonds	Researcher
Tania Osborne	Lead health and social care inspector
Lynn Glassup	Health and social care inspector
Richard Chapman	General Pharmaceutical Society
Jacob Foster	Care Quality Commission inspector
Nikki Brady	Ofsted inspector
Paul Brehany	Ofsted inspector
Teresa Kiely	Ofsted inspector
Allan Shaw	Ofsted inspector

Appendix II Glossary

We try to make our reports as clear as possible, and this short glossary should help to explain some of the specialist terms you may find.

Care Quality Commission (CQC)

CQC is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. It monitors, inspects and regulates services to make sure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety. For information on CQC's standards of care and the action it takes to improve services, please visit: <http://www.cqc.org.uk>

Certified normal accommodation (CNA) and operational capacity

Baseline CNA is the sum total of all certified accommodation in an establishment except cells in segregation units, health care cells or rooms that are not routinely used to accommodate long stay patients. In-use CNA is baseline CNA less those places not available for immediate use, such as damaged cells, cells affected by building works, and cells taken out of use due to staff shortages. Operational capacity is the total number of prisoners that an establishment can hold without serious risk to good order, security and the proper running of the planned regime.

Challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP)

Used by all adult prisons to manage those prisoners who are violent or pose a heightened risk of being violent. These prisoners are managed and supported on a plan with individualised targets and regular reviews. Not everyone who is violent is case managed on CSIP. Some prisons also use the CSIP framework to support victims of violence.

Family days

Many prisons, in addition to normal visits, arrange 'family days' throughout the year. These are usually open to all prisoners who have small children, grandchildren, or other young relatives.

Key worker scheme

The key worker scheme operates across the closed male estate and is one element of the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model. All prison officers have a caseload of around six prisoners. The aim is to enable staff to develop constructive, motivational relationships with prisoners, which can support and encourage them to work towards positive rehabilitative goals.

Leader

In this report the term 'leader' refers to anyone with leadership or management responsibility in the prison system. We will direct our narrative at the level of leadership which has the most capacity to influence a particular outcome.

Learning walks

Structured observations where education leaders observe teachers in the classroom setting, often with a focus on specific practices or objectives.

MAPPA

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements: the set of arrangements through which the police, probation and prison services work together with other agencies to manage the risks posed by violent, sexual and terrorism offenders living in the community, to protect the public.

Offender management in custody (OMiC)

The Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model, which has been rolled out in all adult prisons, entails prison officers undertaking key work sessions with prisoners (implemented during 2018–19) and case management, which established the role of the prison offender manager (POM) from 1 October 2019. On 31 March 2021, a specific OMiC model for male open prisons, which does not include key work, was rolled out.

Protected characteristics

The grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010).

Protection of adults at risk

Safeguarding duties apply to an adult who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs); and
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse and neglect (Care Act 2014).

Secure video calls

A system commissioned by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) that requires users to download an app to their phone or computer. Before a call can be booked, users must upload valid ID.

Social care package

A level of personal care to address needs identified following a social needs assessment undertaken by the local authority (i.e. assistance with washing, bathing, toileting, activities of daily living etc, but not medical care).

Special purpose licence ROTL

Special purpose licence allows prisoners to respond to exceptional, personal circumstances, for example, for medical treatment and other criminal justice needs. Release is usually for a few hours.

Time out of cell

Time out of cell, in addition to formal 'purposeful activity', includes any time prisoners are out of their cells to associate or use communal facilities to take showers or make telephone calls.

Appendix III Further resources

Some further resources that should be read alongside this report are published on the HMI Prisons website (they also appear in the printed reports distributed to the prison). For this report, these are:

Prison population profile

We request a population profile from each prison as part of the information we gather during our inspection. We have published this breakdown on our website.

Prisoner survey methodology and results

A representative survey of prisoners is carried out at the start of every inspection, the results of which contribute to the evidence base for the inspection. A document with information about the methodology and the survey, and comparator documents showing the results of the survey, are published alongside the report on our website.

Prison staff survey

Prison staff are invited to complete a staff survey. The results are published alongside the report on our website.

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